



**For Immediate Release
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STATE ANNOUNCES APRIL 16 – 22 AS FOREST FIRE AWARENESS WEEK

Governor Romney issued a proclamation today, joining other New England states in declaring April 16 – 22 to be Forest Fire Awareness Week. Historically, the greatest numbers of forest fires occur in April.

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Commissioner Stephen H. Burrington is encouraging all citizens to use caution while visiting the state forests and parks, and to be conscious of wind and the drought conditions when burning forestry debris.

“As the legal season for permitted open burning nears its end in many of our communities, the risk of these permits going out of control increases as does the weather factors which greatly affect forest fire,” he said. “Individuals and families should be especially aware of forest fire when enjoying the outdoors in general during this spring vacation break, and to make an effort to be extra careful with ashes and matches.”

DCR’s Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry Chief James DiMaio added, “DCR has joined its fellow Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission (NFFPC) members in promoting an increased awareness to the dangers of forest fire. More awareness will help residents protect themselves, as well as their homes and personal property.” The NFFPC is made up of the six New England states, New York, the provinces of Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the New England National Forests.

Fire prevention specialists from DCR suggest the following *Fire Smart/FireWise* tips to help property owners protect their homes from wildfire loss:

- Chip or compost vegetative debris piles
- Clean your roof and gutters and remove leaves, branches and other debris from your yard to prevent burning embers from a wildfire igniting your home.
- Move the remainder of your woodpile, lumber, or other burnable debris to at least 30 feet from any buildings.
- Check the spark arresters on your combustible engines in equipment such as lawn mowers, ATVs, dirt bikes and chain saws.

For more information, contact your nearest DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control office or go online to <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/firecont/index.htm>.

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